

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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PRESENT PROBLEMS IN THE CONSTITUENCIES

By THE EDITOR. (SECOND ARTICLE)

The Criticism Complex.

Seasonal slackness, a symptom displayed by most parties in the summer, will not explain a steadying-up of a volume of criticism to which the government has been subjected in our own ranks, and which has certainly moderated somewhat during the past few weeks. Something of a lull we suppose was to be expected when it was announced that the National E.C. was to meet the N.A.C. of the I.L.P., because the Easter Conference of the latter body had certainly opened wide the flood-gates.

With that matter we here have no immediate concern, but we are interested in the criticism complex that always was a factor in our movement and lately has given our organisers some uneasy moments. In the past, and for the best part of thirty years, criticisms of successive governments have been the daily joy and food of Labour propagandists and supporters—with an occasional change of menu in the way of an odd Labour leader. We have flourished on this diet, grown to lusty manhood, and to-day, we inherit the estate, somewhat encumbered, it is true.

But is this bring-up quite the sort of experience to console a party to the limitation of accomplishment belonging to a minority government, that we should expect no murmurs here and there? In truth we are not alarmed at the criticism the government gets in our own ranks, connected as so much of it is with both the propaganda and the legitimate and illegitimate views of an active and earnest section of the party discontented with the government's achievements, and able to arm its case by citing Labour's programme against Labour's proposals. One outstanding fact of the present political situation is that despite our Party's criticism complex, the other parties have a bigger problem than we have!

Having thus stated the case and recorded our belief that the party is in no real danger from within, we would

remind our readers that we have always held in the "Labour Organiser" that it is not the concern of organisers to take sides in internal controversies, but rather to *make the team work*; nor is it wise for the agents and secretaries to adjudge too hastily the moment or the act which distinguishes disloyalty from determined criticism. The dividing line is sometimes exceedingly fine and at all times during the last thirty years some minority in the movement has tempted fate, yet lived to survive it.

If then the duty of the organiser is to organise, seeking neither the favours of the Right nor the plaudits of the Left, how is he, good man, to win the esteem of both and the confidence of each? A secret in your ear, my reader. There be many can talk, many can criticise (have we not spoken of the criticism complex) but *few can organise*! Then let the cobbler stick to his last.

And here a hint. In military affairs young blood is spilt first. How sadly true is it that in our own movement young, eager spirits are broken first! Take away from party critics those that are young, vigorous and soaring with belief and there is not much left. The big-minded organiser who gives the restive ones a job to do (which can be done, and a congenial job at that) will cause them to lose something of their vision as they become immersed in Party work—but they gain by bringing nearer their hopes and WE gain, immeasurably so. The organiser who is out to argue ere he organises, will miss this opportunity. Expelling, condemning, catechising will only mark the man who doesn't understand our Party's complex. Harness them all.

But in all this we have not lost sight of the necessity for Party defence. Criticism has a profound value inside the movement. But whatever the sympathies or the toleration of the organiser, it is his business to organise the defence of the party when publicly challenged, and to put forward the

Party's case and its government's accomplishments. If there is any acid test for critics at all, it is how far they will co-operate, not in speaking, but in organising such events. Propaganda, per se, heaps of critics can justly be asked to speak on, but the Labour Government's record, its obstacles, and its programme ought to be put, and put by those whose sentiments are beyond question. Toleration to critics, please, but in return—more toleration.*

Unemployment.

Probably there is no politician of any Party but has given thought as to how Unemployment is going to affect the fortunes of the Labour Government at the next election. But behind the problem there is another one to which nobody yet has drawn attention. How are the steadily mounting figures affecting Labour Party organisation in the constituencies, and how is it affecting the normal work and finance of local Parties?

Answering the question quite truthfully it is astonishing that the fact of some 1,800,000 persons being unemployed has not had greater reactions upon our local movements. Perhaps this is one more instance of the resilience of our Party to which we have so often drawn attention. Have not our local Parties survived even worse general and local cataclysms—the General Strike, the miners' strikes and wide and total stoppages in the past in cotton, wool, railways, and the like? And despite the fact of deflections here and there, disappointment, desperation and despair in a few who had expected too much, and in spite, too, of anti-Labour propaganda and mischief-making among the unemployed, we are bound to record that there is little evidence that more than a small section of them blame the Labour Government for their plight.

* We are well aware that our conclusions will be met on one side by the charge that we do not realise how deep-rooted is the discontent at the Government's "failure" and on the other side we shall be accused of pandering to those who do infinite harm both within and without the movement, and whose speeches are the best weapons our opponents can use. But we speak for and to the organisers and secretaries, who out of the welter should see one clear aim and purpose, i.e., the good of the whole and not of a part. And the organiser cannot look after this if he is incessantly either the apologist for or the opponent of any section of the Party. If the composition of the Party changed to-morrow, the organiser's problem in this respect would still remain.

(Pace, those on my left. I am merely recording my own observations of fact).

But 800,000 people cannot be added to the unemployed without repercussion on our movement. If no revolt is seen, if Capitalism is blamed as it ought to be and not Labour, and if remedial measures are in sight, the fact remains that the high, new total must embrace thousands of formerly active Labour men and women. Is that activity functioning now?

How curious it is that in talking of the unemployed, so many politicians always speak of them as a sort of soulless mass—the common herd or tribal helots; the waiting stock on the shelves of Capitalism; the queueing cattle in the world's market place. Yet tens of thousands of these were the Ministry makers of a year ago, the corporals, sergeants, majors, captains, and the generals in a victorious army.

And it is this fact which is presenting an acute new problem in many places. The unthinking person might imagine that an unemployed person has more time for his pastimes, and if politics are his play he will give more time to it. How sadly this overlooks the tragic effect of unemployment on the individual. Not many can conquer the reactions of idleness, underpay, underfeeding, and want of hope and occupation, sufficient to throw more effort into politics.

The fact is many Parties now feel the pinch and need to study how to hold these helpers. Other parties find a contraction in contributions due directly to straitened circumstances. We believe that something can be done to meet the latter situation by more catering in suitable centres for the pleasures of the unemployed. It is probably a good thing for Governments that in spite of the paucity of their income, the unemployed do spend a little of their income on enjoyment. But beer, cards, horses and pictures might be largely ousted by suitable attractions from Labour sources. Cheap outings, cheap whist drives, bowls, public games, draws, even rummage sales and sales of work.

There is some danger in us losing contact with the unemployed and there are many ways of getting over the difficulty, given a little thought. Several times lately we have seen queues and crowds of unemployed, and remarked that only a few yards away the Labour Hall stood empty! This, of

course, would not be if a strike was on. But is not the present emergency comparable with strike conditions in respect of unemployed needs? It is worth consideration whether or no all our Labour Halls should be thrown open at least for some portion of the day for the present purpose. "The Daily Herald," a few games, and a fire when needed would help to counter the very serious loss we sustain by the unemployment of so many of "our own."

The Agricultural "Interest."

From the earliest days of our Party there has been a small but adamant section who in season and out of season has urged propaganda on the countryside as the one thing needful to give the Party power. Had their advice been taken at its face value we might yet be ploughing the sands as a forlorn opposition with no great headway in the country to show for it. But as we shall show presently, time has been on our side, and conditions for propaganda and organisation to-day are simply not comparable with the difficulties of old. It is as well, however, ere we essay, to briefly explore the field we hope to conquer, and understand how far we may expect to go with the agricultural "interest."

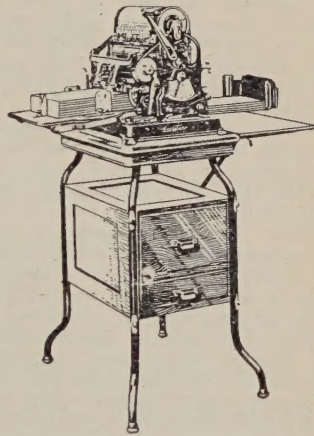
Largely owing to the vocal activities of that recent body, the Farmers' Union, the public has heard more in late years of the depression (depressions is the better word) in agriculture, and please—all politicians, even our own, if we will but confess it, have hastened to prescribe remedies calculated to please and incidentally attract the vote of the agricultural interest. It is apposite to the problem in organisation involved (and organisation involves propaganda), to correctly appraise the electoral value of this "interest" before we go further and its worth not only in terms of possible votes, but in man and woman power to the Socialist Movement.

Now the agricultural interest is probably yet the largest single economic interest in this country. But it is easily divisible into two great classes, *i.e.*, those who live *on* Agriculture, and those who live *by* Agriculture, more or less. The first class embraces the landlords, the rentiers' retinue, the shooting and hunting classes, estate agents, money-lenders, many auctioneers, middlemen, competitive seedsmen and numerous market stragglers. To none of these classes has Labour anything to offer except the altruistic delight of

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working for a movement that would gladly extinguish their jobs.

That leaves us the farmer, his employees, *certain necessary dependent trades*, and a small but essential professional connection, which includes the vet., the lawyer, the banker, the teachers and the parson — not all "essential," perhaps! This thinning out of the agricultural "interest" is based on commonalty, rather than sentiment, and we will not forget, if politicians sometimes do, that large numbers of country people *whose interests are not the same as that of the farming class* vote with them. Labour propagandists, in order to check this tendency have only to point to the effects of agricultural derating on the other country residents; such people now have an interest of their own very much opposed to the farmers'.

In thus seeking to find the range, so to speak, of Labour's appeal in the countryside, we are much tempted to question the farmer himself. How many real farmers are there in this country? The writer with a personal and intimate knowledge of agriculture, and taking as an instance a five mile range from his home in typical, good, mixed farming country, would cut out no less than 60% of the farmers in that area as unnecessary and redundant persons without whom the whole of the land could be farmed equally well. With newer machinery, larger fields and central folds no less than 80% of the "farmers" would be found unnecessary.

We are of the opinion that no bolstering up of the farmers with other people's money, no keeping of the ring from outside competition, and not even marketing schemes will remedy an evil fundamental to the system of farms and farming as conducted to-day, and by which 60 to 80% of farmers become classable with the hordes who live on the industry rather than by it.

The Real Countryside Problem.

How will these views appeal to the bucolic gentlemen, who two or three times a week meet their cronies at successive markets to groan aloud at the depression in the business they are not attending to? So cut the cackle, and bring forth the hosses, we are convinced that, as for the farmer, the brainy and far-seeing men (who will be captains in the industry when economic processes have played their part), will

come along to us in due course, but the others are best left in their wallow.

And the farm labourer? Well, he has been a difficult proposition all along, hasn't he? And though he is a Radical by tradition (incidentally, how much of the rebel spirit was exported to the colonies and U.S.A.?), his self-expression as a politician is not easy with the average farmer for an employer. But again, time has been on our side. To-day the skilled man is becoming the rarity; it is the farmer himself who is too plentiful! And further, the labourer's wife has a vote. This is the best fact of all now that we can get to see them, and that is why we think opportunity is coming our way.

Before we go on, however, a word as to the other agricultural interests. Every one of these could be genuinely interested and sincerely converted to Labour's cause, and the point of view concerning farming which we have expressed. Indeed, many of them have long thought the same thing. The error of many townspeople is the supposition that the countryside is all farmers and labourers. By personal contact (and rarely by meetings on the green) there are to be coached and caught the schoolmaster, the professional man (not always to-day a blind Tory), the parson (ditto), the shopkeepers and the country trades. Difficult, you say? But less so now than the similar classes in the towns because *all these know what is hollow about British farming!*

The task of winning the countryside is no light one, but we *should* understand present tendencies; and the movement back from the towns to the country is one in our favour. Gradually the countryside is receiving a new leaven which knows not the old Gods and incidentally Labour is becoming actually scarce at anything over 15 miles from the towns. There is also the flow from the towns into the county divisions affecting areas sometimes up to 30 miles away. So that if the old stationary population was like a dead wall of sheer reaction, ungetatable and mysterious in the early days, or was up till recently, what of the great bus invasion which has made all Britain a roadside, and everybody to live by it? Not only buses, but cars and motor cycles (both of which have caught up our Labour people) which can take us there and bring us back?

But that is only half the story. Penetration of the countryside we understand. Do we appreciate the reciprocity response? The countryman's travels; his modern connections; his knowledgeable facilities, and the fact that the young countryman, man for man, is to-day actually more intelligent and better informed than his town brother? No? Then one does not know what the 20th century has accomplished by its changes.

Altogether we believe the problem of the countryside is now much simpler; there is a public waiting for our message, and mostly we have means of getting it to them.

(To be continued).

REGISTRATION OF RAILWAYMEN AS ABSENT VOTERS.

In the past considerable variation has taken place in different parts of the country regarding railwaymen whose turns of duty compel them to be away from home, and in respect of whom the probability exists that they will not be able to vote in the ordinary way at a Parliamentary election.

In some places large numbers of men have been placed on the Absent Voters' List and a tendency on the part of some registration officers to refuse this facility was checked some time ago. It has, however been the practice of some of the Companies to endeavour to arrange the turns of duty so as to permit of men exercising their right to vote wherever possible. In respect, however, of one Company, at any rate, a circular has recently been issued in which the withdrawal of the latter facilities is indicated, and railwaymen subject to away from home duty are notified to apply to be placed on the Absent Voters' list.

Labour agents and secretaries should be alive to this matter and enquire from local railwaymen concerning their position. The last day for making application to be registered as an Absent Voter is 18th Aug. (1st Sep. in Scotland)

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LAW AND PRACTICE



PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES.

We have received some evidence lately that the limitations of a "Prospective" candidate are yet not understood in many quarters, and the desire to go ahead and do things, which ought not to be done, seems sometimes to be irresistible with certain people and Parties. We propose, therefore, to endeavour to state as clearly as we can in non-technical language the exact position of a Parliamentary candidate in relation to his coming candidature, and to the commencement of his election.

First it should be understood that the term "Prospective" is purely one of convenience, and it is not used in any statute. A definition of the term "Candidate" is given in Section 63 of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883, but that definition has virtually been extended to cover a person who, at whatever time or place, announces himself, or is announced by others, as a person seeking the votes of electors. Whether announced or not any person in respect of whom some cost has been incurred or step taken to appeal for votes, is a "candidate" so far as certain provisions and prohibitions apply.

The law distinguishes between a purely "Prospective" candidate and, shall we say, an actual candidate. In anticipation of an election Parties are in the habit of selecting their champion a long way ahead. But the mere fact of selection does not mean that a candidature has begun—in the same sense that an "election" has begun. The selection by a Party, or the announcement of an individual that he intends to stand at the next election, is after all but an expression of intention—a promise or a threat that he will take a certain step at a certain time. The

consummation is to be in the future, i.e., it is "prospective," deferred, possibly contingent.

But, though a person may thus announce a future intention, it does not follow that he or she is suspended twixt heaven and earth till the issue of the writ, or until the election campaign begins. The law recognises that a person, who has the intention of becoming a candidate, possesses peculiar interests in the constituency he intends to woo, and it is within his rights to seek means of propagating the views he holds as distinct from propagating his own personal cause. The Judges have admitted an even closer interest, for if he is to become a candidate he is naturally interested in the state of the register, and he may employ a registration agent. He may actually employ a man who will organise the machinery of the Party to which he belongs, and the future candidate may subsidise the Local Party organisation for such purposes. In all this the law will hold that the candidature is not begun.

Still, with all these privileges, there are certain very definite pitfalls. There is no date fixed by statute saying, when an election begins, for though the issue of the writ governs the official procedure and converts the person ultimately nominated into a statutory candidate, certain acts may commence the election prior to his attaining the statutory status, and he will be held liable for those acts as a candidate, and if they involve expense he will be compelled to include the items in his return.

Throughout the long procession of petitions Election Judges have invariably declined to give any clear definition to guide candidates in so important a matter as that just mentioned.

In the Plymouth Petition the Judges expressed the opinion that it "would be a convenient matter if Parliament should consider the fixing of a date of an election beginning, just as it fixes the date for the election ending." We venture to disagree with the learned Judge in this matter, for the fixing of a date prior to which expenses need not be returned would only lead to greater abuses than at present. Further, the expression the Judge used regarding an election "ending" is misleading, for the fact is that payments *may*, under certain circumstances, be made in respect of an election long after the day for filing the return of expenses, and in one respect they are subject to the same provisions as payments made long before the election because they *must* be "*returned*." The final ending is only less indefinite than the first beginning. Early or late, any payment, legal or otherwise, in relation to the conduct of an election, raises an issue in that election.

But to our point. If a candidate desires to retain to himself the freedom which accompanies a detachment from his election he must take care that no act of his or her friends precipitates the commencement of the contest. If he asks for votes he has begun; care must be exercised that at public meetings no enthusiast exceeds his duty by an appeal for votes. The result of so doing or of an advertisement announcing the speaker as a candidate, might be to cause the meeting to be an election expense. That is the real danger attaching to a candidate who precipitates the commencement of his election, because when he has begun his election many actions that were previously permissible now become suspect. The law then takes a different view of the meetings he holds, the literature he distributes, and perhaps also of his employment of his registration agent. He is now no longer a person waiting for an anticipated event, strengthening his Party's cause by legitimate means, and waiting for time to blossom forth and fight. He is fighting now in the eyes of the law; the gloves are "off," to use Mr. Baldwin's analogy (though one always thought a fight began when the gloves were "on").

Of course, it may be said that after all if one had to declare all the expense one goes to prior to the election there would be no danger of exceeding the

limit of expenses. But that is not the real danger in most cases. It is rather that of omitting some item. And, further, there is involved the complicated law of agency. The candidate is responsible for the illegal acts of those persons whose activities he enlists. Ordinarily this liability is limited to the short period of the election when everybody is more or less under control, and instructions can be given to prevent illegalities. But a candidate who unnecessarily extends this liability is increasing it a thousand fold without any safeguards or advantages to himself.

And now for the question of the sort of preparation a candidate or his supporters may *legitimately* make. Mark in passing that a candidate who has begun his election is not free to spend money unless he has appointed an election agent.

We have already seen that in anticipation of the election certain propaganda may be indulged in without the costs counting. There does not appear to be anything to prevent a candidate contracting for certain stationery to be delivered at the time of the election—such as envelopes. Such an act is not inconsistent with a future intention, though it is much safer for the candidate to do nothing of the kind, but to arrange with his Party to make certain preparations. In passing it may be said that a political Party is a private body and if they have selected a candidate they are, so to speak, in a sort of partnership with him regarding that future intention. Things may be said regarding the candidate and his coming election at a Party meeting which are not to be said at a public meeting. For instance, the Party would, we think, be quite at liberty to secure pledges from its own members as to the part they will take when the election comes on.

At any rate, Judges' decisions have endorsed the procedure of charging to the election account stocks of stationery held by Local Parties, thus approving the procedure of political Parties laying in stores of election material in readiness for an election. In this the law seems for once to belie its reputation as "an hass." We are sure, however, our readers will not be able to exonerate it so completely in respect of some of the other aspects which we have explained above.

THE LABOUR PARTY

League of Youth

Monthly Bulletin

EDITOR :

W. ARTHUR PEACOCK.

No. 1 (NEW SERIES)

JULY, 1930

A Word from The Editor

THIS month the Bulletin appears in a new form and we are anxious that it will receive the support of the members of the League of Youth throughout the country. We want to see orders from branches and we want to receive articles and reports from officials and members. The Bulletin, it is important to remember, is the organ of the League of Youth and its columns are open to its members for the discussion of all problems that affect the League organisation and which are likely to interest the members. It will be our endeavour to make

the greatest possible use of these columns. Educational articles will appear to help young people coming into the movement who are anxious to know something of its past and its principles. Reports on happenings in the League work will always be recorded and help and useful hints given on all matters upon which advice is sought.

In this connection we would again emphasise that all editorial communications should be addressed to The League of Youth Bulletin, Transport House South, Smith Square, London, S.W.1. Orders for copies and for other League literature should be sent to the Publications Department at the same address.

What Branches are Doing

SUMMER has come and members of the League are spending much of their time rambling through the beautiful lanes of the country, playing tennis and cricket in the public parks and open spaces, swimming in the local baths and generally fostering a programme of enjoyable social activities. All the year the work of the League goes on and even if the nature of that work changes in accordance with the dictates of the Weather Clerk it always has one object—to interest young people in the work of the Labour Party. The following reports indicate what some of the branches are doing.

S. Islington.—Visits have been paid to Carreras "Black Cat" factory, The "Daily Sketch," The Fire Brigade and the Houses of Parliament. A mock Parliament and a mock Police Court have been held, a band has been formed and two successful socials run.

Chislehurst is a new branch and in a note telling of the inaugural meeting the secretary records that a beginning has been made with 35 members. "We are getting on fine," he says.

Lincoln has sent good reports on previous occasions, but it rightly expresses its pride in recording that one of the members, Miss Maisie Taylor, has won a Mary McArthur scholarship. Miss Taylor is the Vice-President. Another member of the branch, Miss Richards, of the W.E.A., has also won a scholarship. We send our congratulations to both friends.

Woking, in a report which was held over last month owing to space limitations, tells of a public debate held with the local imps and dealing with the record of the Labour Government.

Wisbech branch motto is "Perseverence makes Progress," and experiences gained during the last year have led members to realise its truth. A year ago only nine members had enrolled and meetings were not too encouraging.

Concluded on the last page of "The League of Youth Bulletin."

Forgotten Pioneers.

Winstanley : A Land Reformer

IT is surprising how little is known of the Digger movement of the days of the Commonwealth. It is seldom referred to by historians and it is more than probable that it would have been long since forgotten had not some of its literature been preserved in the British Museum, Bodleian and Guildhall Libraries. The story of the Diggers should be known to every student of the people's movement. It was a determined effort to curb the power of landlordism, a source from which George Fox derived inspiration and of which Quakerism was the outbirth, the forerunner of the land movement of last century which had its chief apostle in the person of Henry George.

About Gerrard Winstanley, the leader of this movement, little is known. His writings reveal that he was a man of good education and that he was a Freeman of The City of London for one of his early literary efforts was entitled "A Watchword to the City of London." He enters the pages of history, however, in the year 1649 and about one month after the execution of King Charles. Information was received by the Privy Council to the effect that men calling themselves "The Diggers" had taken possession of Sir George's Hill, Surrey, and not only had commenced to dig the land but had invited others to do the same. The council instituted enquiries as the result of which it declared that there was no need to worry since the Diggers were no more than 20 in number. Subsequently they did take action and Winstanley and Everard, the leaders, were summoned to a meeting of the Council. While at this meeting they refused to uncover their heads, declaring that to do so was to admit that the Privy Councillors were their superiors.

Shortly following this episode the Diggers published a pamphlet entitled "The Levellers' Standard Advanced." This was signed both by Everard and Winstanley but it is interesting to note that the name of the former appears on no other literature. Equally curious is the fact that Winstanley disappeared without anyone knowing what became of him. He left London for Nottingham intending to conduct a caravan

propaganda in that city. He arrived at the city but nothing more is known.

His writings reveal his point of view quite clearly. They show that his religious views were considerably influenced by the teachings of Jacob Boehme, the German Mystic. His views upon social problems are reflected in his pungent comment upon such topics as capital punishment and the land question. On the subject of Capital Punishment he wrote: "But is not the rule; He that sheds a man's blood by man shall his blood be shed. I answer it is true but not as usually it is observed. If any man can say he can give life then he hath power to take away life. But if the power of life and death be only in the hands of the Lord then surely he is the murderer of the creation that taketh away life of his fellow creature man by any law whatsoever. If a third come to kill me for murdering you he is a murderer of me and so murder has been called Justice when it is but the curse."

Winstanley was arrested on the 11th July, 1649, and was charged at Kingston. He was refused an hearing on the grounds that he and his three colleagues, who were also charged, refused to pay for a defending attorney. Despite the attempts of the authorities to break up the movement their efforts were unsuccessful and, finally, what legal action failed to do was successfully achieved by means of spreading lies concerning their moral character, stealing their goods, and arousing the people against them.

Writing to Parliament, in 1650, Winstanley said: "The common land is my own land, equal with my fellow commoners, and our true property by the law of creation. It is everyone's but not one single one's." On another occasion he wrote "True religion and undefiled is this—to make restitution of the earth which has been taken and held from the common people by the power of the Conquest formerly, and to set the oppressed free. Now, if any man can prove from the Law of Righteousness that the land was made peculiar to him and his successively, shutting others out, he shall enjoy it freely for my part. But I affirm it was made for all and true religion is to let everyone enjoy it."

In his final work, "The Law of Freedom on a Platform or True Magistracy Restored," he outlined his views for establishing the Commonwealth.

"When the sun of righteousness," he said, "arises in magistrates and people, one in another, then these tumultuous national storms will cease and not till then. This Sun is risen in some—this Sun will rise higher and must rise higher. And in the bright shining of it will be England's liberty."

This was said three hundred years ago. We still labour towards the goal of which Winstanley had vision. "All things are moving onwards and nought can bid them stay." **W.A.P.**

Helping the Secretary

The other day I learned that a questionnaire sent out by the Labour Party had brought only 44 answers. This means that only one out every five branches had answered. The information secured was of little value since it represented the view of only a small minority of the members. It means that the secretary will need to send out further questionnaires, and that it will take considerably longer to secure this information.

This is regrettable. We know that local secretaries are voluntary workers and that their time is fully occupied, but a little more attention to such matters as this will be exceedingly helpful. The National Committee cannot carry out its work effectively unless all local officials and branches co-operate. A circular from the Secretary to the Committee or from the Party office should be considered at the first available business meeting. The reply should be sent to headquarters as soon as the Secretary has his instructions. If this is done, the National Officials will be able to collect the information they need much more speedily.

Just as local secretaries can help national officials by prompt attention to correspondence, so, too, can members of branches help their local secretaries. The last-named person has often to send repeated reminders concerning payment of subscriptions, dates of meetings, return of dance tickets and other items of a small character. They may seem very unimportant to the member, but they count very much to the secretary who discovers that apathy on the part of members adds to his work.

We should all try to lessen the labours of our local officials. Prompt payment of subscriptions, prompt an-

swers to correspondence, punctual attendance at meetings, these are the things which make life pleasant for secretaries. See you do your bit now.

Sell Literature

Branches who are holding propaganda meetings will do well to remember that literature should always be on sale. There are plenty of cheap pamphlets on all problems available from the Labour Publications Dept., The I.L.P., and the Fabian Society, and the sale of these not only helps to make converts for our Cause but also adds often to the finances of the branch. A letter to any of the organisations mentioned above will bring a list of literature available.

Secretaries are reminded, too, that supplies of the leaflet, "Youth's Great Opportunity" are still available. Many branches have yet to order. It should be remembered that this was produced to meet the wishes of the League members. It contains both an explanation of the objects and a form of membership.

Papers to Buy

An enquiry has been received from a Branch wishing to procure publications for its reading room. The following list is given for the assistance of other branches who may be interested:

The Daily Herald (1d.), The New Leader (Weekly Organ of I.L.P., 2d.), The New Statesman (Weekly review of politics and literature, 6d.), Forward (weekly, 2d.), The Clarion (Monthly Socialist review of politics, literature and the open road, 6d.), The Labour Magazine (Official Organ of Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, monthly, 7d.), Plebs (Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges, 4d.), The Labour Organiser (4d.). A journal of Labour Organisation and election law and practice.).

A Propaganda Question

Question. Dear Editor, our Party does not move very fast down here, and I have been trying to get them to go in for more propaganda meetings and more activity generally. We have now appointed a propaganda Committee and at the first meeting we had a discussion as to what propaganda meant, and we

are not altogether agreed as to what matters properly come under our notice. The term "Propaganda" seems to have a wide meaning, and perhaps you could give us some guidance as to what our Committee ought to deal with. Would you also care at the same time to tell us what you think propaganda consists of entirely?

Answer. As our correspondent says propaganda is a very wide term, but in its ordinary use within our Movement it means active and concrete steps for propagating Labour principles.

It is, however, quite true that propaganda may be silent and unobserved and may even be accomplished by merely personal example. The mode of life of an individual, for instance, may constitute silent propaganda for some cause or belief with which he is associated. The man who wore shorts in the Strand or the pioneers of the bobbed hair movement were guilty of propaganda in a sense, but not in the sense with which that Propaganda Committee will be concerned.

So too, active work in Parliament, or on a Local Government body, may constitute good propaganda. Anything in short which brings credit on the Party to the notice of others is propaganda. Showmanship is an art with which some politicians are well acquainted and this also is propaganda whether it be achieved by asking many questions in the House of Commons or by walking off with the Dunnov Fitch!

Nor is this written flippantly. It should be the aim of Local Parties and their officials to take advantage of the good winds that blow and benefit by every passing chance to obtain credit and esteem for the Party's intentions, joings and associations.

Propaganda of the more virile kind is less subtle, but even so, no Propaganda Committee will be able to take charge of all propaganda activity in a live Party. It must not be lost sight of that much organising work has a propaganda value. Indeed, we have never been able to define the line of difference between organisation and propaganda.

A Propaganda Committee ordinarily organises or recommends definitely aggressive plans for proselytizing. That is not a nice word, and it has never sounded nice to British ears, though it is the correct dictionary word to describe the objects and functions a Propaganda Committee would deal with.

Thus meetings both indoor and outdoor and literature distribution clearly

fall within the purview of Propaganda Committees. In their review of the necessities for more propaganda in their area, a Committee would be within its functions in recommending some forms of canvass, concert meetings, district tours, newspaper or magazine establishment, deputations to T.U. Branches debates, etc., and sometimes even social functions. So much, in fact, do the functions of a Propaganda Committee sometimes overlap those of other Committees that a good deal of tact is necessary to prevent friction and ensure that proposals are not side-tracked by disputes with other Party interests. We believe a Propaganda Committee functions better where it is purely advisory because to load it with the work of organising the affairs which it recommends involves the Committee in activities for which other bodies should be responsible and tends to overlapping.

(Concluded from first page of The League of Youth Bulletin.)

Now, however, membership has jumped to nearly 50: organised dances, and socials have been a tremendous success, and debates and discussions have been held as well. A library has been formed, a cricket club launched, and plans made for the formation of a concert party in the autumn.

We share the secretary's hope that "This report will give encouragement to other branches who are faced with the obstacle of being in a very strong Conservative town."

East Hull has appointed a member to be Press Correspondent and it is his task to keep the Bulletin in touch with local happenings. Other branches should follow this example. E. Hull has 40 members, meetings are held each week, and a variety of subjects have been covered. The social side has not been neglected and as many as 210 people attended the Carnival Dance. A Library and a Camping Club are two other forms of activity.

(Reports for this column should reach Transport House South, Smith Square, London, S.W.1, by the last Friday in each month.)

NOTICE.

"The League of Youth Monthly Bulletin" is issued by the Press and Publicity Department of the Labour Party. By arrangement with the "Labour Organiser" it is first published in the pages of that journal, from which it is reprinted for wider circulation.

LOCAL LABOUR PARTY ACCOUNTS

A System of Book-keeping (Continued).

We have yet to deal with how to keep a record of debts incurred; how to keep the bank account, petty cash, etc., and how to prepare a statement of accounts and balance sheet. We shall then go on to explain, for the use of the bigger Parties, a slightly more complicated form of cash book and the uses of a day book, journal, and ledger.

We want to emphasise here that the analysis form of cash book and the contribution book we have shown are adaptable to the needs of the vast majority of Local Party officers and small organisations. The system shown has the virtue of simplicity. Larger Parties with bigger turnovers, and more complicated dealings, can be expected to have at call persons capable of keeping books in more advanced form.

Now we will go on to explain the further use of the cash book from the point where we left off.

Turning again to the illustration on page 106 of the June "Labour Organiser" it will be noted that the totals of the various analysis columns exactly equal the grand total in the first column. If they did not do so it would be either because of some error in addition or because of some error in carrying forward the items into the analysis columns. This check is of great value in the early detection of errors.

When one comes to open the next page the totals will all be carried forward and one will write "Brought Forward" in the particulars column. Great care should be taken in carrying the totals into the proper analysis columns otherwise the analysis itself will be wrong.

Our illustrations did not show any cash in hand to begin with, but in many cases, and especially at the commencement of a fresh year, there will be some balance to bring forward. This is not an item of *fresh* income and it will be entered as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Cash in hand (or at Bank)			
brought forward	7	9	0

This item is *not* carried forward into an analysis column, though sometimes

this is done for the sake of convenience.

It will be noted that when the sum brought forward, is not carried out, the total column *differs* from the total of the analysis columns; in practice the difference will always be the exact amount of the sum carried forward. We trust this is clear to every reader.

We pointed out last month that expenditure will be recorded in exactly the same manner as income with, of course, the appropriate headings to the columns. Whenever a balance of cash is struck (in other words whenever one reckons up the income and expenditure in order to ascertain the position) there is bound to be either a balance in hand or else the income has exactly equalled the expenditure. So far as the books are concerned there can be no possibility of expending more cash than that which has been received, for that is an impossibility. So if any officer has actually spent more, the cash will have been found by himself and the book must show it. It will be necessary to enter on the *income* side just what has been paid in excess of income. The entry will read: "per Secretary, cash advanced, £ s. d."; or "Mr. ——— loan, £ s. d."—or something similarly worded.

The officer must remember that whenever a balance is struck—(at the end of the year, or such other times as a statement of account is required) the totals of income and expenditure must be made to exactly balance. Generally, there will not be an item as shown above, but the balance will be cash in hand. This, of course, will be entered on the *expenditure* side as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Cash in hand (or at Bank)			
carried forward			

Now let us see where the Treasurer comes in. There are two practices in vogue regarding the relations between officers receiving money and the Treasurer.

In few cases does the treasurer personally receive all money and make all payments. If he does, the system so far explained exactly suits the case, but more commonly secretaries receive

various items of income, and, due to circumstances, must make certain payments. One custom is to hand over all balance of cash to the treasurer and to apply to him when money is wanted, and the other custom is for officers to possess definite authority to hold so much money in hand and to pay accounts up to a named figure.

Whichever system is adopted the basic principles will remain the same, and both officers must keep cash books. There is this qualification however, that at the end of the year one does not want cash statements for publication from every officer, but only a statement of account showing the transactions of the Party. Therefore, ordinarily, it will not be necessary for both the treasurer and the secretary to keep the cash book analysed. A treasurer who simply acts as a sort of bank has no real need to duplicate the analysis of the secretary, and on the other hand the secretary who hands over all cash and merely acts as a sort of messenger in paying accounts might be relieved of keeping the analysis which the treasurer should then keep. These are matters for local adjustment.

So far our illustrations have shown no payments by or to the treasurer, but turning again to page 106 of last issue it will be seen that there might have been included some cash received from the treasurer. If the analysis is being kept a special column should be devoted to these transactions and the analysis total at the foot will then always show the full sum received from the treasurer (or, in the case of the treasurer, the full sum received from the secretary) for the period since the last balance.

So, too, on the expenditure side an item might be "paid to Treasurer" or "paid to Secretary for". For each one of these receipts or payments there will, of course, be entries in the treasurer's book to correspond. When the secretary *pays* over the treasurer *receives*, and vice versa, and therefore, though the figures are the same, the income item in the one book will always be an expenditure item in the other.

Now shall we try and get a statement of account based on last and this month's examples. Our illustration below will show you how the statement will appear. Note particularly that this is a cash statement only. It is not a

balance sheet. A balance sheet is an account which shows assets and liabilities, and though in the example given there is a balance of cash in hand, there *might* be debts exceeding that amount. To get a balance sheet it is necessary to include all bills owing by the organisation, and all sums due to the organisation as debts, together with an estimate of tangible assets in addition to cash.

Cash Statement, 30th April to
30th June, 1930.

	£	s.	d.
Individual Members Fees ...	1	0	0
Affiliation Fees ...	5	0	0
Whist Drives ...	4	6	0
Collection at meetings ...	3	3	4
	£13	9	11

	£	s.	d.
Affiliation Fees, The Labour Party ...	2	10	0
Printing (letter headings) ...	1	7	0
Hire of halls ...	15	0	0
Women's Section (one month's postage) ...	5	0	0
Social Committee (Whist expenses) ...	1	3	5
Balance in hand ...	7	9	0
	£13	9	11

Now in the normal way small organisations will incur very few debts during the year, and they will have even less debts owing to them, for voluntary contributions are not really debts, though there are occasions when members' promises may be valued and included as assets.

When we come to explain the uses of a day book, a journal, and ledgers, we shall show correct book-keeping method of keeping account of liabilities and assets. But it seems to us absurd to advise every small organisation to keep a set of books the use of which would be very occasional, and most probably add to the worries of officers not specially trained to book-keeping.

Therefore, we have no hesitation in advising a small organisation that a day book and ledger are unnecessary where its transactions are almost wholly cash, but it should be a cardinal point that *no debt should ever be incurred without an entry respecting it in some book of account*. It should be the business of the treasurer to record all debts and one or two of the

later leaves in the cash book could be utilised without purchasing another book. This part of the book could be known as the day book, or it could be kept in ledger form and called the ledger. If in day book form the entries would read something like this:—

1930		£	s.	d.
July 7th	Bought of Blackfriars Press, Ltd., 1,000 handbills re Goodtown Meeting (July 20th			
			17	6
July 10th	Bought of National Labour Party 10,000 handbills at 4/- per thousand		2	0
			0	0

Such records will ensure that bills owing will come into the balance sheet if unpaid. If they are paid necessarily the items will be found in the cash statement.

The ledger method is an improvement, but the back of the cash book cannot be used unless the ruling used is that in which both sides of the book are the same (see last month's advice regarding selection of books). A small separate book will really be necessary if this is not the case unless some sheets of suitable ruling are fastened into the book.

To keep the accounts in ledger form the entries can be made exactly as above, but on the other side of the book one will enter the date the account is paid, thus—

July 21st	By cash to Blackfriars Press, Ltd.	£	s.	d.
			17	6
July 21st	By cash to Labour Party		2	0
			0	0

Any items not paid will, of course, clearly show, and this book can be balanced in just the same way as the cash book is balanced. But on the right-hand side one would carry out an item at the foot—

	£	s.	d.
To balance of accounts owing			

And now before we go on to explain more complicated questions, let us clear up one point that will help us in future references. So far, because we have been dealing with cash we have spoken of the left-hand side of the book as the income side, and the right-hand side as the expenditure side. In book-keeping these are known as the Dr. and Cr. side, respectively.

We will explain why this is so. Your account books are really a sort of looking glass reflecting exactly your financial relationship to the monies you handle. Thus, if you receive money—that is a Dr. item and you are a debtor in your books. If you pay money or if you are credited with any cash value, whether it be discount, or goods you have supplied, you are creditor to that amount, and this item will always go on the right-hand side, i.e., the Cr. side of the book of account. This simple rule will help us very much to an understanding of future articles. (To be continued.)

ILLUSTRATION OF CASH BOOK (Expenditure Side).

Date	Particulars.	Totals	Affiliation Fees.	Rent of Halls.	Printing.	Per W'm's Sect'n	Per Social Com't
1930							
5 May	Labour Party, 200 cards ..	2 10 0	2 10 0				
7 May	J. Summerbell, letter headings ..	1 7 6			1 7 6		
9 June	Rent of Goodturn Hall (per curator)	15 0		15 0			
10 June	Women's Section (Secretary's postage for month) ..	5 0				5 0	
10 June	Social Committee — Whist Drive expenses (April) ..	1 3 5					1 3 5
	Cash in hand ..	7 9 0					
	Totals	13 9 11	2 10 0	15 0	1 7 6	5 0	1 3 5

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The "L.O." Guide to Local Government Elections

PART III.—METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS (continued)

THE POLL.

The hours of poll in Metropolitan Borough Council elections are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The actual proceedings at the poll are the same in most respects as at a Parliamentary election and need not be detailed here.

The provisions, however, in regard to the appointment of polling agents are exceptional. The Order in Council governing the matter removes the ambiguity which exists in Parliamentary elections relating to the total number of polling agents who may be appointed by the candidate and election agent, and it makes an attempt to lay down a fair scale applicable whatever the number of candidates. Election agents, if engaged, have no power to appoint polling agents, paid or unpaid, and the matter rests with the candidate.

The number of polling agents to be appointed is dependent on the total number of candidates for any ward as follows:—

In no case may a candidate appoint more than one agent for any polling station.

Candidates must appoint their polling agents in writing, sign the appointment and the same must be delivered at the office of the Returning Officer not less than two clear days before the day of the poll. Note the distinction between this and Parliamentary procedure. In the latter a polling agent usually carries with him his appointment, and the R.O. is usually notified by a list, no express time being laid down for its delivery so long as it is in time.

From the scale below it will be seen that dispute is possible in the appointment of polling agents when the total number allowed is less than the total number of candidates. Some agents may represent one or more candidates, while other candidates will be unrepresented. The Order in Council partially settles this matter by assuming that candidates will nominate agents in excess of the number allowed, and in such case the Returning Officer will give preference to the agents whose appointments bear the signature of more than one candidate, or the largest number of candidates. Thus the polling agents apparently can have a little election of their own before the other one starts, and the Returning Officer in the case of equality of votes decides the issue.

In these elections the candidate has not the power of entry to a polling station which he has in a Parliamentary election, where it is provided that a candidate may be present at any place at which his agent may attend.

Every polling agent must make the statutory declaration of secrecy before

THE COUNT.

Here again the authorised procedure at a count does not differ from that of a Parliamentary election.

There is considerable difference however, regarding the provisions for appointing counting agents.

The method of appointment is the same as for polling agents, and the same scale applies except that the

Number of Candidates.

3 or less	...	...	...	...
4 to 20 inclusive	...	...	...	...
21 to 40	"	...	...	...
41 to 60	"	...	...	...
Over 60	"	...	...	...

Number of Polling Agents Allowed.

1 agent	per station	for each candidate.
3 agents	per station	between the candidates
4 agents	"	"
5 agents	"	"
6 agents	"	"

number of counting agents may be twice as many as the number of polling agents.

The candidate has no special right of attending at the counting of the votes, but he may take the place of one of his own counting agents if he so desires (or one whom he has joined with others in appointing).

It would seem that if the candidate does not act as a counting agent he is only entitled to admission to the count provided the total number of counting agents is less than permitted, and that he is willing to act in that capacity. This risk of being shut out where there are a large number of candidates should induce candidates to make sure of their attendance by being among the appointed counting agents.

The name and address of every counting agent is to be transmitted to the Returning Officer at least one clear day before the opening of the poll; presumably the candidate is to do this. The Order in Council does not specify that the appointment shall be handed to the Returning Officer, but it would be as well that a written appointment was made and that the counting agent notwithstanding that his name has been transmitted, should carry his appointment with him.

Every counting agent, including the candidate, must take the statutory declaration of secrecy before the opening of the poll. An exception is made for a candidate who at the last minute chooses to substitute a counting agent when the declaration need not be taken before the opening of the poll but must be taken before acting as counting agent.

ELECTION OFFENCES.

The election offences in Metropolitan Borough Council elections are substantially the same as for an Urban or Rural District Councils. The offences at these elections were dealt with on page 191 of the "Labour Organiser" for October, 1929, and page 42 of March, 1930.

The differences between offences in these elections and elections for provincial Municipal Boroughs are not great, the principal distinction being in regard to election expenses. No maximum of expenditure exists, and election returns are not required.

An election petition may be presented on one or more of the following grounds:—

- (1) General bribery, treating, undue influence; or persuasion.
- (2) The commission of corrupt and illegal practices or offences against the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, as applied to these elections.
- (3) On the ground that the person declared elected was at the time of the election disqualified.
- (4) On the ground that the person declared elected was not elected by a majority of lawful votes.

Where it has been decided to present a petition the same may be presented by four or more persons "who voted or had a right to vote" at the election by either of the candidates. The petition is heard in the High Court.

The time for presentation varies according to the ground on which it is made. Ordinarily the petition must be presented within twenty-one days after the day of election. If corrupt practices are alleged, and a payment of money or other award is alleged to be made or promised *since* the election by the person elected, or on his account, the petition may be presented within twenty-eight days after the date of the alleged offence.

Where the election petition is lodged on the ground of an illegal practice the time for presentation is six weeks after the day of election.

The security demanded from petitioners is less in a Metropolitan Borough Election than in a Municipal Election and is to be £50 unless a Judge orders a lesser amount or a larger amount not exceeding £300.

(Concluded from page 136.)

point of interest is that in Bolton we invite to the Group meetings all CANDIDATES for municipal honours once they have had their candidatures endorsed by the Delegate Meeting.

Finally, should Labour members of a local Council accept Chairmanships or Vice-Chairmanships so long as they are a minority party in the Council? We argue that they should, on the ground that it would unwise for Labour to take Office suddenly, and possibly monopolise ALL Chairmanships, etc., without members having had some little previous experience.

If I can help by giving information on any point not clear, drop me a line at the Spinners' Hall, Bolton (Lancs), and I will gladly reply by return.

OUR AGENTS AT HOME AND AT WORK

WILLIAM BAREFOOT, J.P., JOINT CHIEF EXAMINER LABOUR PARTY AGENTS EXAMINATION SCHEME.

Well loved and respected throughout Labour's ranks, William Barefoot has raised a monument to his name in the Woolwich Labour Movement. The premier Local Labour Party in the country—first in membership to-day as it was years ago in enterprise and achievement—claims W. Barefoot as its own. For was it not he who together with Will Crooks in 1902 laid the foundation of permanent success; and it has honoured its agent in the twenty-seven years of his connection with it by every distinction within its gift.

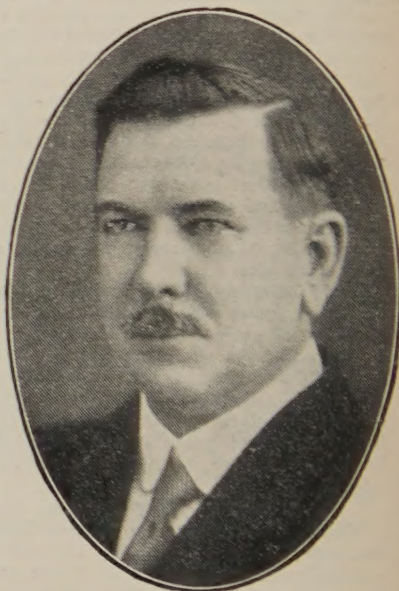
After the memorable by-election in 1903 which added Will Crooks to the tiny band of Labour Members in the House of Commons, there was but one thing for Woolwich to do, and they did it. Mr. Barefoot was asked by his colleagues to leave his work in the Arsenal and accept the post of Secretary and Agent to the newly formed Labour Representation Association (now the Woolwich Labour Party). It is claimed by Woolwich folk that this appointment was the first full time political agency appointment ever made in the Labour Movement, and certainly it has stood the test of time.

Born in Woolwich in 1872 William Barefoot began work at the age of fourteen in the Woolwich Arsenal. It was the engineering lock-out of 1898 that led him to a study of economics, and here he came under the personal influence of the late Keir Hardie and J. Ramsay MacDonald. He joined the I.L.P. in 1897 and became secretary to the Woolwich Trades Council in 1899.

At that time the Woolwich T.C. was only a progressive organisation, but the present Prime Minister was induced by Mr. Barefoot to accept an invitation in 1900 to contest Woolwich at a By-election for the London County Council. The result of this election, while not a win for Labour, convinced our subject that the way to electoral success was through ward organisation, and a Labour press. At this time he started and himself edited, the "Labour Journal," a monthly publication which was the forerunner of the "Woolwich Pioneer," the famous Labour paper

which ran from 1904 to 1922 under the editorship of Mr. Barefoot. The effects of the war and the overwhelming rise in costs compelled the Pioneer to cease publication in 1922.

William Barefoot was responsible for drafting the first constitution of the Woolwich Party, based on ward organisation and individual membership, the two vital principles of organisation which as indicated above Mr. Barefoot has always stood by. Incidentally, the income from individual members' subscriptions in Woolwich last year was £693.



It is not only as a first-class organiser that William Barefoot has proved his worth to the Labour Movement: success has also followed him in his work as an administrator in local affairs. He has sat continuously as a member of the Woolwich Borough Council since 1911, and for a term of two years previously. Since 1919 he has been the leader of the majority Labour group on the Council, and it can be said without fear of contradiction that the impregnable position in which the Labour Party stands in

Woolwich in relation to its local administration is to a very great degree due to the organising and administrative ability of its secretary and agent. He was Mayor of Woolwich in 1925/27.

In the national sphere the Woolwich Labour Movement had hoped to give William Barefoot the opportunity to represent the Borough he loved so well, and he was the Parliamentary candidate for West Woolwich in 1923, 1924 and 1929. He was successful in reducing the Tory majority from four thousand to three hundred and thirty two (East Woolwich is held by an almost two to one majority). Having thus brought the seat to within a definite probability at the next election he asked to be relieved of his candidature in order to concentrate again on political organisation and public administration.

On the establishment of the Labour Party Scheme of Study and Examination for political agents, he was invited and agreed to act as one of the chief examiners, of whom there are two. Still full of go and energy after his long innings, Mr. Barefoot is therefore giving the benefit of his long experience and profound knowledge to assist the young aspirants on the road. If many follow his example of hard work and conscientious application there are good times in store for other places than Woolwich.

LABOUR GROUPS ON PUBLIC BODIES.

Labour Party Suggests Constitution and Standing Orders.

Following our article on this matter in the June "Labour Organiser" we have received several responses to our request for information as to the working of Labour groups. We print below an article kindly sent us by Coun. H. Eastwood, Labour Agent, Bolton, who not only gives us the experiences at Bolton, but the result of considerable enquiry made at other centres. Apparently a good deal of divergence exists, but chiefly in regard to the composition of the Labour group.

This matter has also been receiving the attention of the National E.C. of the Labour Party, and as we go to press a draft of proposed Standing Orders for Labour groups on local authorities, outside the administrative County of London, has been circulated to certain Local

Parties for consideration. These Standing Orders lay down a basis for the composition of the group as well as methods of procedure. It is not intended that the draft now circulated should be regarded as the final proposals of the National E.C. in this matter, but it is intended to secure the views of responsible Parties, and in its revised form the draft will be submitted to the Annual Conference at Llandudno for approval. Thereafter Labour groups would definitely become a recognised part of Party machinery, for the Standing Orders would operate in the same way as constituency rules do, though, as in the latter case, Local Parties would be privileged to make suitable amendments to suit local circumstances under the approval of the National E.C.

We welcome the new proposals as being designed to fill a genuine gap in Party machinery, and to prevent a growing dissimilarity of practice. If Labour representation and Labour supremacy in Local Government matters is to become a real thing, the actions and proceedings of its elected members require regulation and discipline together with adequate consultation with the Local Parties.

COUNCIL LABOUR GROUPS.

By

H. EASTWOOD, Labour Agent, Bolton.

George Bernard Shaw once said (and immediately forgot) that "success brings its own troubles." It is, however, more or less true that success in Labour circles to the extent of securing a large number of members on the local Councils does, apparently bring its difficulties. Many efforts have been (and are being) made, to discover the right way of arranging for Labour members of local Councils to get together and decide common action so far as their own particular Council is concerned. The relationship between the local Labour Party and the "Council Labour Group" too, bristles with difficulties, judging from some of the letters received on the subject. I have endeavoured to ascertain the procedure adopted by most local Labour Parties by means of correspondence and some interviews, and perhaps a suggestion may be helpful.

Assuming the existence of a local Council, on which Labour has say 12 or more members. How are these members to deal collectively with the problems they have to face as Coun-

cillors: problems which cannot always be settled by a delegate meeting, except in principle. The generally accepted way is for the "Group" (I use this term because it is the most generally used and known) should meet between the receipt of the abstract of proceedings and the Council meeting.

The Group should previously have appointed its chairman, who will act as Leader in the Council. Also a Chief Whip, who will record minutes and conduct correspondence, and a Junior Whip as assistant.

The agenda should be in the following order. Minutes, correspondence, reports, consideration of Committees' proceedings. Any other business.

Arising out of consideration of the proceedings of the Committees of the local Council, if it be desired that a matter should be raised at a Council meeting, a member of the group should be appointed to either ask a question, move the reference back, or move an amendment or the deletion of the minutes appropriate to the purpose sought. A seconder in the case of an amendment should also be appointed by the Group.

In order to provide elasticity to meet varying local needs, or views, it may be of interest to state what actually operates in Bolton, and then to state what variations of our local procedure is adopted in some other districts. We have 35 Labour members of the Bolton Town Council. The Council meetings are held on the first Wednesday in each month at 10-0 a.m. As members of the Council, we receive a printed report of the abstract of the Council Committees' proceedings on the Saturday prior to the Council meeting. Our Town Council Labour Group meets on the Monday prior to the Council meeting on the Wednesday. For the convenience of members we meet in the afternoon one month and in the evening on alternate months. Our agenda is as stated previously. But every now and then we discuss general principles apart from the abstract, and decide to send in a "notice of motion" in support, say, of the taxation of land values for local purposes, or municipal banking, direct labour and the like.

We decide who shall send in the notice and who shall second it, and who shall be the principal speakers for our side. In case of anything arising of extreme urgency, the Group Leader decides and the two whips notify the

Group members verbally on the morning of the Council meeting.

Now comes the vexed question as to whether the local Labour Party should have representatives present at Group meetings. We elect two members annually from the Delegate Meeting to represent the Party members in the Group. They also present a report of Group meetings to the Monthly Delegate Meeting. In this way, contact between the Party and the Group is maintained.

This procedure can be varied in an interesting manner by the Group arranging a Rota of its members, who will give in turn a brief address to the Delegate Meetings on Council Meetings generally, or specifically on the work of the particular committee they are members of.

In many districts, Party representatives are elected to the Group and allowed to speak, but NOT to vote or move resolutions or amendments. In some districts the E.C. appoint Group representatives who merely report to the E.C. Three districts reported that NO representatives are allowed to attend Group meetings on the ground that they are "a d—d nuisance." (Autre temps, autre modes). Another (Concluded on page 133).

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